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SUBJECT: GOVERNOR'S RACE: REFORMISTS UNITE BEHIND ANTI-BASE CANDIDATE
ITOKAZU IN 11TH HOUR

11. (SBU) Summary: After months of polarizing debate and a brief split, Okinawa's six reformist parties agreed to back a single candidate for the Okinawa prefectural governor's race, upper house national Diet member Keiko ITOKAZU. If all six parties remain united, Itokazu's chances for election are good as she is telegenic and popular in Okinawa. However, her ideological and extreme anti-base stance, lack of administrative experience in either the public or private sector, and perceived lack of ties to Tokyo could weaken her in the eyes of conservative and moderate voters, making this a close race for governor. Itokazu's views on the US-Japan security alliance and bases in Okinawa have been clear over the years - she has said many times she believes all bases should be closed and the Security Treaty should be reviewed. Her election would not be conducive to smooth implementation of base realignment plans in Okinawa. End Summary.

The Path to the Itokazu Candidacy~

12. (SBU) After four months of polarizing debate and a brief split, Okinawa's six reformist parties finally agreed on a single candidate to run in the prefectural governor's race, national Upper House Diet member Keiko ITOKAZU. The reformist parties first met in April 2006 and many suggested Itokazu as

the best candidate. Her Okinawan Socialist Masses Party (OSMP) repeatedly refused to let her run because as OSMP's only nationally elected member, she was also its primary income source.

13. (SBU) With Itokazu apparently out of the race, the candidate field narrowed from seven to two candidates, independent national Diet member Mikio SHIMOJI and former Okinawa prefectural government (OPG) Treasurer Tokushin YAMAUCHI. National upper house Diet member and Chairman of the Democratic Party of Japan (DPJ) in Okinawa Shokichi KINA told us that the reformist camp split into two, with Sozo, DPJ, and OSMP supporting Shimoji and the Japanese Communist Party (JCP), the Social Democratic Party (SDP), and Jiyu Rengo supporting Yamauchi. Deliberations continued with deadlines for a resolution being repeatedly set and broken. Each failure to agree lead to renewed calls for Itokazu to run.

14. (SBU) In late August, as the coalition was on the brink of dissolution, OSMP relented on the possibility of Itokazu running, on the condition all parties unite behind her. OSMP chairman Masaharu KINA told us in May 2006 that the party believed the reformist camp lost the 2000 gubernatorial and 2006 Nago mayoral races because it failed to unite behind one candidate, and that OSMP would be willing to compromise to assure unity. The dissolution of the six party coalition on September 1 seemed to shake many within the reformist camp. Kina said after the dissolution OSMP contacted the different parties and asked them whom they could all unite behind. All responded with Itokazu's name. On September 13, OSMP reversed its stance and agreed to put Itokazu as a candidate, which she publicly accepted the next day. Shimoji's Sozo party announced it would support Itokazu's candidacy (and drop Shimoji's) if all other parties united behind her. The Democratic Party of Japan

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(DPJ) followed suit.

15. (SBU) Soon after, OSMP entered negotiations with the SDP and on September 16 SDP dropped its support for Yamauchi and announced it would back Itokazu. The Japanese Communist Party (JCP), now the only backer of Yamauchi, announced on September 17 that it did not want to run an independent candidate. With momentum clearly behind Itokazu, Shimoji withdrew his candidacy on September 16, and Yamauchi renounced his bid on September 18.

~ Weakens the Reformist Camp

16. (SBU) Although all six parties support Itokazu, our contacts told us that many were disaffected by how she was selected. Kin Town Mayor Tsuyoshi GIBU told us that the reformists' public image was damaged after months of deliberation failed to produce a unified candidate. Further, while party heads switched to Itokazu at the last minute, many supporters did not. Komeito Chairman Tomonori ITOSU told us on September 22 that many labor union members still favor Yamauchi and DPJ's Kina said its supporters favor Shimoji.

17. (SBU) The discussions also left many hurt feelings. The DPJ's Kina said that he and Shimoji had received several critical e-mails from the far left accusing them of deliberately bogging down the talks. One e-mail even went as far as to suggest they were CIA spies. Further, Kina said that JCP's stubbornness in the talks had made him dislike the party even more, calling JCP "dishonest." When asked how the DPJ planned to work with the JCP to come up with a unified platform, Kina responded that the DPJ would work with other reformist parties who would in turn work with JCP.

18. (SBU) Some reformist worry that Itokazu lacks the credentials to be governor. Ryukyu University Professor and reformist leader Masaaki GABE told us in April 2006 that he thought Itokazu was a poor candidate because she was strong on only one issue, anti-militarism. He added she does not have the administrative experience necessary to run the OPG. DPJ's Kina told us that even OSMP Chairman Masaharu Kina, whose name was

also raised a possible candidate, was unhappy with Itokazu's selection because he feels she is not qualified to be governor.

LDP: Itokazu Bid Worst Case Scenario

¶9. (SBU) The Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) candidate for governor, former Okinawa Electric Power Company Chairman Hirokazu NAKAIMA, and other LDP officials told us on numerous occasions the worst-case scenario would be for the reformist parties to unite behind Itokazu. September 20 LDP Okinawa's Executive Director Hiroshi NAKAMATSU told us that the LDP's best hope is that the reformists would fail to agree on a platform. Nakamatsu thought that since the JCP and SDP had submitted to the more moderate reformists' demands for Itokazu as the candidate, they would insist on a hard-line platform. However, the DPJ and Sozo, both of which recognize the US-Japan Security Treaty and support some presence of US bases in Okinawa, would refuse to back a platform calling to abrogate US-Japan security relations, in Nakamatsu's view.

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¶10. (SBU) Nakamatsu's hopes could be realized - we hear that JCP and SDP are objecting to Sozo's participation in platform discussions. DPJ's Kina told us that JCP felt Sozo was too conservative to participate in discussions and blamed the party for the reformists' delay in candidate selection. Kina noted that Shimoji, himself, did not want to participate because of he felt the six party talks were too time consuming. However, Kina said he planned to fight to have Sozo included because Shimoji was the only person who could talk to the US and formulate a platform with US-Japanese relations in mind. Kina noted that he was successful in getting Sozo included in the candidate selection process despite opposition from JCP, hinting he could get Sozo included in the platform selection process too.

Comment:

¶11. (SBU) Though the six parties have finally united behind Itokazu, her chances of winning in November are not certain. Many in the LDP have told us that an Itokazu bid was their worst-case scenario given her extreme popularity and high public reputation. But months of rancorous debate have left hurt feelings in the reformist camp, and our contacts tell us that many are not 100 percent behind her. Also, the reformists' public image was damaged by the failure to select a candidate for over four months and some question if the coalition can hold together after she's elected. Had the reformist settled on Itokazu in April 2006, they might have had more time to recover from any friction, but with little less than two months before the election, time is not on their side. In any event the November 19 election looks to be very close.

¶12. (SBU) Itokazu has told the press that the "U.S. base problem" will be the focus of her campaign, and she is already on record as opposing the realignment plans agreed by the two governments at the Security Consultation Committee October 2005 and May 2006. Instead, she says the bases should be closed. In our own public statements, while avoiding taking a position on who should be elected governor in Okinawa, we intend to point out that the Okinawan people should be clear on their choices with respect to the future of our bases here. That is, the choice is between a very good plan to significantly reduce the burden in Okinawa (by relocating MCAS Futenma, moving 8,000 Marines plus families to Guam, and consolidating facilities south of Kadena Air Base), or maintaining the status quo. Itokazu's idea of simply closing all bases is not one of the options on the table, as both governments have agreed on the need to maintain and enhance our alliance deterrence capabilities.

Biography of Keiko Itokazu

¶13. (SBU) Keiko Itokazu was born in October 11, 1947 in Yomitan village and graduated from Yomitan High school. From 1966 to 1992 she worked as a bus tour guide. Initially, the tour guide script provided tourists with tales of the heroic deeds of Japanese soldiers at WWII battle sites in Okinawa. However,

after Itokazu learned of her own mother's horrific war experiences from her aunts, including the loss of a newborn

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daughter on the battlefield and a three year old son to malnutrition and malaria, Itokazu began a campaign to change the tour script to include stories of Okinawan civilians ground between two military forces, of Korean forced laborers, and of "comfort women." She and colleagues also organized a study group on Okinawans' experiences and the Japanese military's behavior during the war.

¶14. (SBU) In 1992, Itokazu was elected to the Okinawa Prefectural Assembly(OPA). Following the 1995 rape of a 12-year old Okinawan girl by three US service members, Itokazu joined the newly formed Okinawan Women Act against Military Violence peace activist group. In 1996, as the group's co-chair, she visited the United States to meet with US Congresswomen and women's rights and human rights activist groups. The group characterized sexual violence committed by US service members as "not merely ~ crimes committed by individual soldiers, but as crimes produced by the military system."

¶15. (SBU) In 2000, Itokazu was a signing member of the joint statement from the East Asia-US Women's Network Against Militarism which called for, among other things: halting plans for new or replacement bases in Okinawa and the ultimate removal of all military from the island; revising the Status of Forces Agreement; opposing US-Japan Defense Guidelines requiring Japan to provide facilities and personnel to support US military activities in East Asia; and eliminating Japan's "sympathy budget" supporting the US military in Japan.

¶16. (SBU) Itokazu remained with OPA until 2004 when she won election to the upper house of the national Diet in a decisive victory over her conservative challenger, Masatoshi ONAGA. Itokazu won 58 percent of the votes cast, making her Okinawa's number four vote-getter since reversion in 1972, according to press reports and statistics provided by Governor Keiichi Inamine. In 2005, Itokazu made her second visit to the United States to lobby for the immediate closure of Marine Corps Air Station (MCAS) Futenma, saying that would be "the first step of a visible reduction of the burden shouldered by Okinawa." She also asked for cancellation of the plan to relocate MCAS Futenma to Camp Schwab. In an April 2005 press statement Itokazu said, "we must never allow them to change our beautiful ocean into a military base."

¶17. (SBU) Itokazu's husband works as her political secretary. Her hobbies include Haiku (Japanese poetry.) Her favorite saying is ichigoichie, a phrase connected with Japanese tea ceremony and other traditional arts that roughly translates as "Treasure every meeting for it will never reoccur." Itokazu speaks very little English but appears to be able to understand some.

MAHER